

"Brooke Manor" House
Furnace Street
Birdsboro
Berks County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-1075

HABS
PA
6-BIRD
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

"BROOKE MANOR" HOUSE

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Location: Furnace Street, Birdsboro, Berks County, Pennsylvania.

Present Owner: St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Birdsboro, Pennsylvania.
House demolished by church for erection of church and educational buildings.

Brief Statement of Significance: "Brooke Manor" was the home for over one hundred years of a well-known iron-making family and was typical of manor houses that are now rapidly disappearing. The Brooke family owned Birdsboro, Hibernia, and Hopewell furnaces.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physicel History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: George and Edward Brooke c. 1840. Continued in Brooke family until 1952. Then sold to St. Mark's Lutheran Church, which had the structure demolished.
2. Date of erection: Greek Revival portion c. 1840.
3. Architect: Architect of original portion unknown; Victorian portion may have been designed by Frank Furness.
4. Notes on alterations and additions: Extensive addition of large dining room and service wing c. 1875, and also the addition of a large bay in library in original house.
5. Sources of information:
 - a. Mrs. Donnell Marshall, nee Cornelia Brooke.
 - b. Illustrated Historical Atlas of Berks County (Reading, Pennsylvania: Reading Publishing House, 1876).

- B. Historical Account: The following was prepared by Cornelia Brooke Marshall, 780 South Hamilton Street, Pottstown, Pennsylvania, in October 1962:

"'Brooke Manor,' Birdsboro, Penna.

"The house 'Brooke Manor' was built at Birdsboro, Pa. by Edward & George Brooke, young ironmasters, about 1840. The original part of the house was built in the Greek Revival style of architecture

and consisted of a central portion of hallway and parlors with a small wing at each side. Later, in the 1880's, a large Victorian addition was added to the right wing. There was one porch only, that at the front, on the original building.

"When the house was built, a boxwood garden in geometric design was planted at the back, on one side of a long grape arbor. Opposite this, the vegetable garden also was edged with English boxwood. An orchard was planted of cherry trees, apples and pears. One hundred years later, the family still enjoyed the boxwood garden and pear trees. The Brooke family lived here from 1840-1942.

"Mr. Robert E. Brooke (son of Edward Brooke) died in 1942. For ten years thereafter a group of tenants occupied the house, at which time it was purchased by St. Mark's Lutheran Church of Birdsboro, who planned to restore the house for use as a Sunday School Building and to build a church on the grounds. Their architects later decided that restoration for this use would be impractical, so it was decided to remove the house. This was done in the summer of 1961. The Church has been built on the site of the garden and a new Sunday School Building is planned. The grounds are the same and have been greatly improved with good maintenance.

"Due to the large size of the house and change in modern living conditions, the house was no longer adaptable as a residence. It is to be regretted that it was not preserved as a public building."

- C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:
Charles Brooke III, Newtown Square, Pennsylvania.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Large manor house of several periods. Original portion Greek Revival; wings added in the later nineteenth century. Unusually wide, moat-like, brick paved area surrounding original house, providing full fenestration to service area and kitchen in basement, as well as entrances to ice house and caves. Bridged over by front and rear porches.
2. Condition of fabric: Demolished 1961.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: 66' x 121' over all.
2. Foundations: Stone.
3. Wall construction: Brick.

4. Porches: Greek Revival porch on front. Porch across main section of Greek Revival portion facing gardens in rear. Small, typical entrance porches on Victorian additions.
5. Chimneys: Brick.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Three matching French windows on main entrance porch, with original cremone bolts.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Shutters on first floor, blinds on second floor of original portion only. Considerable variation in glazing, according to period. Gable and windows on Greek Revival portion changed from classic circular to twin round top windows.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Main house--gable roof, tin covered. Additions--mansard variation, slate and tin.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: Varied according to period of house portion.

C. Technical Description of Interiors:

1. Flooring: Wood--most overlaid with hardwood flooring.
2. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster.
3. Doorways and doors: Paneled wood doors--Greek Revival and Victorian.
4. Trim: Wood--Greek Revival and Victorian.
5. Hardware: Excellent for each period. Bronze French cremone bolts to carpenter locks in early portion.
6. Lighting: Electrical--early twentieth century.
7. Heating: Central heating. Classic mantels in double parlors, purchased in Italy. Handsome Victorian fireplace.

D. Site:

1. Orientation and general setting: Front facing north. Brooke Manor occupied hill overlooking Birdsboro and the Brooke steel mills.

2. Outbuildings: Carriage house, stables. Underground ice house, root cellars adjoining house.
3. Walks, driveways: Curving drive from Furnace Street encircling house.
4. Landscaping, gardens: Boxwood gardens to the south in formal geometric design. Well-planted grounds.

Prepared by Norman M. Souder, Architect
National Park Service
October 1962